DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 439 328 CG 029 896

AUTHOR Shiah, Yung-Jong; Tam, Wai-Cheong Carl; Chiang, Shih-Kuang
TITLE Separation-Individuation Process of Taiwan High School Students and Its Implications in Counseling.
PUB DATE 1997-05-00
NOTE 10p.; In: Caring in an Age of Technology. Proceedings of the International Conference on Counseling in the 21st Century (6th, Beijing, China, May 29-30, 1997); see CG 029 879.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adolescents; *Comparative Analysis; Counseling; Cultural Differences; Foreign Countries; *High School Students; High Schools; *Individual Development
IDENTIFIERS *Borderline Personality Disorder; Chinese People; Separation (Psychology); Taiwan

ABSTRACT

The separation-individuation process is an important developmental process of the individual self and disturbances in this process may lead to the manifestation of borderline personality symptoms. Previous studies have shown that the psychological developmental stages of the Chinese children and adolescents in Taiwan occur at an older age compared to those in American society. This paper describes a study that investigated the separation-individuation process of 522 high school students in Taiwan using the Separation-Individuation Process Inventory (S-IPI). Results indicate that there is a significant correlation between the scores on the S-IPI and the borderline personality symptoms self report. There was no significant difference on the S-IPI score between the male and female students. The cultural differences in the separation-individuation process between the Chinese and American populations, as well as the validity of the S-IPI for the Chinese population, are discussed. The implications of the issue on separation-individuation in counseling are presented. (Contains four tables and 20 references.) (JDM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 439 328

Separation-Individuation Process of Taiwan High-School Students and Its Implications in Counseling

By

Yung-Jong Shiah, Wai-Cheong Carl Tam,
And Shih-Kuang Chiang

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

L.D. EVRAIFF

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC).

CG029896

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Separation-Individuation Process of Taiwan High-School Students and Its Implications in Counseling

Yung-Jong Shiah[a], Wai-Cheong Carl Tam[b], and Shih-Kuang Chiang[c]
Chung Yuan Christian University
Taiwan

[a]Graduate student of the Institute of Psychology at Chung Yuan Christian University.
[b]Associate Professor of the Department of Psychology at Chung Yuan Christian University.
[c]Clinical Psychologist at Yu Li Veterans Hospital, Taiwan, and graduate student of the Institued of Psychology at Chung Yuan Christian University.

ABSTRACT

The separation-individuation process is an important developmental process of the individual self, and disturbances in this process may often lead to the manifestation of borderline personality symptoms. Previous studies indicate that the psychological developmental stages of the Chinese children and adolescents in Taiwan occur at an older age compared to that of the American Society. This study investigates the separation-individuation process in 522 high-school students in Taiwan by using a self-report questionnaire, which includes the 39-item Separation-Individuation Process Inventory (S-IPI) and a 9-item self report assessing borderline personality symptoms. Results indicate that there is a significant correlation between the scores on the S-IPI and the borderline personality symptoms self report. In addition, there is no significant difference on the S-IPI scores between the male and female students. The cultural differences in the separation-individuation process between the Chinese and the American populations, as well as the validity of the S-IPI for the Chinese population, are discussed. The implications of the issue on separation-individuation in counseling are also discussed.

Since Mahler,Pine & Bergman(1975) systematically proposed a theory of Separation-individuation (S-I) regarding human psychological development,many studies have been conducted to investigate this issue. According to Mahler et al.(1975),an individual experiences normal autistic phase and normal symbiotic phase before entering into S-I process. This process, which consists of 4 stages, begins at about 4 or 5 months after birth and lasts until at age 3. The 4 stages are the differentiation subphase, the practicing subphase, rapprochement, and the phase of libidinal object constancy.

Research indicates that the psychopathology of borderline personality disorder might involve the S-I process. Christenson & Wilson (1985) developed a S-I Process Inventory and administrated it to a group of 20 borderline personality disorder subjects and a group of 180 normal controls. Test results showed significant group difference with the borderline personality disorder group had the higher scores. The research results of Dolan , Evans & Norton(1992) were compatible with that of Christenson et al. (1985).On the other hand, Levine, Green, & Millon(1986) developed the S-I Test of Adolescence and obtained satisfactory results on its validity. Coonerty (1986) administrated the Rorschach Inkblot Test to groups of borderline and schizophrenic patients respectively. The former showed more S-I themes than the latter. The results of other studies also supported the theory of

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CG029896

the S-I process(e.g., Holmbeck & McClanahan , 1994 ; Kroger & Green , 1994 ; McClanahan & Holmbeck , 1992 ; Levine , 1994 ; Levine & Saintonge , 1993).

Regarding the gender difference in the S-I process, research results are inconsistent. For example, McChrystal et al.(1994) showed that females had significant fewer hindrances in the S-I process than that of males. However, Allen & Stoltenberg(1995) obtained no significant gender difference between the scores of their sample.

Culture might be a mediating factor on the S-I process. That is ,people of different cultures might have different S-I processes. Both Li(1992) and Slote(1992) argued that the Eastern countries, such as China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, have a kind of integrated culture under the Confucian influence and thus the family is the basis of the individual ego structure and self image. This is quite different from the Western countries , which emphasize individualism. Tang(1992) proposed that the S-I process reflects a cultural difference as does the dominance of reaction formation as a defense found among Chinese . As a result, comparing to Western people, Chinese people might have a slower and more unstable S-I process,in addition to having more individuation anxiety.

Daniels(1990), Holmbeck & Wandrei(1993) and Schultheiss & Blostein(1994) proposed that unsuccessful S-I process might lead to adolescents' disruptive behavior, dissatisfaction toward family and society ,despair, or suicide. Applegate(1988) used the theory of S-I process in investigating the process of marital psychotherapy.Schneider (1992) suggested that counselors provide emotional support to unsuccessful S-I patients. It is clear that the S-I process has important implications in counseling.

This study investigates the S-I process of Taiwan high-school students.It is hypothesized that (1) there is a correlation between the S-I process and borderline personality symptoms,(2)there is no gender difference in the S-I process, and (3) the S-I process of the Chinese in Taiwan is different from that of the U.S.

Method

Subject

522 (age 15 to 19, M=16.7, SD=0.028) high school students were recruited from Changhua Boys' and Changhua Girls' High Schools in Taiwan in which 283 were males (age 15 to 19 , M=16.61 ; SD=0.037) and 239 were females (age 15 to 19 ,M=16.72 ; SD=0.042) .

Material and Procedure

This study utilized a self-report questionnaire,which includes the 39-item S-I Process Inventory (S-IPI) developed by Christenson et al. (1984) and a 9-item self report assessing borderline personality symptoms. The S-IPI was a Chinese translation version of the original English version with the permission of its original authors. The Chinese version of the S-IPI have been pretested to make sure that the translation items are clear. The questionnaire also contains 2 items assessing the subjects' honesty of the responses. Subject responded on a 10-point

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

scale for the S-IPI and a Yes-No format for the other items .In order to enhance the cooperation of the subjects,they were first told that they had to complete a questionnaire on interpersonal relations. On completion , they were debriefed on the purpose of this study.

Results

The means and standard deviations of the scores of the subjects on the S-IPI and the borderline personality symptoms receptively are shown in Table1.

Table1

Means and Standard Deviations of the scores on S-IPI and borderline personality sympto

	Overall Sample (n=522)		Male subjects (n=283)		Female subject (n=239)	
Scale	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
S-IPI	176.36	37.48	177.10	36.44	175.51	38.72
borderline personality symptoms	2.86	1.65	2.88	1.61	2.85	1.70

The correlations between the scores on the S-IPI and the borderline personality symptoms were shown in Table2. The correlations for the overall sample ,male and female subjects within the sample were significant respectively. .

Table2

Correlations between the scores on the S-IPI and borderline personality symptoms

	Overall (n=522)	Male Subjects (n=283)	Female Subjects (n=239)
Correlation	.496**	.456**	.538**

**p < .01

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The means and standard deviations of the scores of the S-IPI and borderline personality symptoms of the subjects who endorsed 5 or more borderline personality symptoms(called the borderline symptoms group ,in which the subjects might have the diagnosis of borderline personality disorder) were shown in Table3.

Table3

Means and Standard Deviations of the Scores on the S-IPI and borderline personality symptoms of the borderline symptom group

borderline symptom group	Overall subjects (n=81)		Male subjects (n=46)		Female subjects (n=35)	
Scale	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
S-IPI	208.8	33.6	208.5	33.81	209.2	33.81
borderline personality symptoms	5.65	.91	5.52	.69	5.83	1.12

The correlations between the scores on the S-IPI and the borderline personality symptoms of the borderline symptoms group were shown in Table4. The correlations for the whole group,male and female subjects within that group were significant respectively.

Table4

Correlations between of the scores on the S-IPI and the borderline personality symptom of the borderline symptoms group

	Overall sample (n=81)	Male subjects (n=46)	Female subjects (n=35)
Correlation	.341*	.388**	.327*

*p < .05

**p < .01

Results also showed that there is no significant difference for the S-IPI scores between male and female subjects,both for the overall sample($t=-0.48, p<0.05$) and the borderline symptoms group ($t=-0.21, p<0.05$).

Discussion

Results of the overall sample indicate that there is a significant correlation between the scores on the S-IPI and the borderline personality symptoms. This is compatible with the results of the studies of the previous research(e.g., Christenson et al.,1985; Dolan et al.,1992). This supports both the theory of S-I process and the validity of the Chinese version of the S-IPI. Nevertheless ,more research on the validity of the Chinese version of the S-IPI still is needed.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Results of this study also showed that there is no significant difference on the S-IPI scores between the male and female subjects both for the overall sample and the borderline symptoms groups. This is compatible with the results of some of the previous studies(e.g. ,Allen & Stoltenberg,1995). However ,since the gender difference of the S-I process is a rather complicated issue, further study is needed to clarify the present situation.

If the sores of the S-IPI of the this study are compared with that of the Christenson & Wilson's (1985), it is found that the Taiwan sample obtained somewhat higher scores(M=176.4, SD=37.48) than that of the U.S. (M=120.6,SD=40). Culture difference between the Chinese and the Americans might be one possible explanation of the differences of the S-I process of the people of these two nations. Direct observation of the S-I process in different cultures might be one of the future research directions.

Although the subjects were recruited from 2 Taiwan high schools, there exists no evidence of any specifics of this sample. Therefore the results of this study might generalize to represent the whole Taiwan high school student population. Further study might include students from other high schools in Taiwan to investigate the validity of this generalization.

If different cultures have different S-I processes, then the issue of utilization of the theory of S-I in counseling must be handled with special care. That is ,the counseling techniques which are useful or issues needed to be dealt with in one culture might not be applicable in another culture. For example ,as the Taiwan high school students have higher scores on the S-IPI than that of the U.S.,one cannot infer directly that the former has more S-I problems then the latter without consideration of the S-I difference in different cultures .Thus the application of counseling techniques developed in one particular culture to another culture must be dealt with extreme caution and thoughts.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Results of this study also showed that there is no significant difference on the S-IPI scores between the male and female subjects both for the overall sample and the borderline symptoms groups. This is compatible with the results of some of the previous studies(e.g. ,Allen & Stoltenberg,1995). However ,since the gender difference of the S-I process is a rather complicated issue, further study is needed to clarify the present situation.

If the sores of the S-IPI of the this study are compared with that of the Christenson & Wilson's (1985), it is found that the Taiwan sample obtained somewhat higher scores(M=176.4, SD=37.48) than that of the U.S. (M=120.6,SD=40). Culture difference between the Chinese and the Americans might be one possible explanation of the differences of the S-I process of the people of these two nations. Direct observation of the S-I process in different cultures might be one of the future research directions.

Although the subjects were recruited from 2 Taiwan high schools, there exists no evidence of any specifics of this sample. Therefore the results of this study might generalize to represent the whole Taiwan high school student population. Further study might include students from other high schools in Taiwan to investigate the validity of this generalization.

If different cultures have different S-I processes, then the issue of utilization of the theory of S-I in counseling must be handled with special care. That is ,the counseling techniques which are useful or issues needed to be dealt with in one culture might not be applicable in another culture. For example ,as the Taiwan high school students have higher scores on the S-IPI than that of the U.S.,one cannot infer directly that the former has more S-I problems then the latter without consideration of the S-I difference in different cultures .Thus the application of counseling techniques developed in one particular culture to another culture must be dealt with extreme caution and thoughts.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

REFERENCES

Allen ,S. F.& Stoltenberg , C. D. (1995) .Psychological separation of older adolescents and young adults from their parents : An investigation of gender differences. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 73*,542-546.

Applegate , J. S.(1988). Alone together : an application of separation-individuation theory to conjoint marital therapy. *Clinical Social Work Journal , 16*(4), 418-429.

Christenson , R. M. & Wilson , W. P.(1985). Assessing pathology in the separation-individuation process by an inventory : A preliminary report. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 173*(9), 561-565.

Coonerty ,S. (1986) . An exploration of separation-individuation themes in the borderline personality disorder. Annuel Meeting of the Society for Personality Assessment (1985,Tampa ,Florida). *Journal of Personality Assessment, 50*(3), 501-511.

Daniels, J. A. (1990) . Adolescent separation-individuation and family transitions. *Adolescence, 25*(97), 105-116.

Dolan, B. M., Evans, C. & Norton, K. (1992). The Separation-Individuation Inventory association with borderline phenomena. *The Journal of Nervovs and Mental Disease, 180*(8), 529-533.

Holmbeck, G. N. & McClanahan G. (1994) .Construct and content validity of the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence : A reply to Lenvine. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 62*(1), 169-172.

Holmbeck, G. N. & Wandrei, M.L. (1993) .Individuation and relational predictor of adjustment in first-year college students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology 40*(1), 73-78.

Kroger ,J.& Green ,K. (1994) . Factor analytic structure and stability of the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 50*(5), 772-785.

Levine ,J. B. (1994) . On McClanahan and Holmbeck's construct validity study of the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 62*(1), 166-168.

Levine ,J. B., Green , C. J. & Millon ,T (1986) .The Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 50*(1), 123-137.

Levine ,J. B.& Saintonge ,S. (1993) .Psychometric properties of the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence within a clinical population. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 49*(45), 492-507.

Li, M.(1992). Cultural difference and ingroup favoritism : A Comparison of Chinese and American. *College Students Bulletin of Academia Sinica, 73*, 153-190.

Mahler , M., Pine , F. & Bergman , A. (1975). *The psychological birth of the human infant*. New York : Basic Books.

McChrystal , J. & Dolan , B. (1994) . Sex-role identity and separation-individuation pathology. *Counseling Psychology Quarterly, 7*(1), 25-34.

McClanahan ,G. & Holmbeck ,G. N. (1992) .Separation-individuation, family

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

functioning, and psychological adjustment in college students : A construct validity study of the Separation-Individuation Test of Adolescence. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 59*(3), 468-485.

Schneider ,S. (1992) . Separation and individuation issues in psychological rehabilitation. *Adolescence, 27*(105), 137-144.

Schultheiss , D. P. & Blustein , D. L. (1994) . Role of adolescent-parent relationships in college student development and adjustment. *Journal of the Counseling Psychology, 41*(2),248-255.

Slote, W.H. (1992) Oedipal ties and the issue of the separation-individuation in traditional Confucian societies. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis, 20*(3), 435-453.

Tang, N. M. (1992) .Some psychoanalytic implications of Chinese philosophy and child-rearing practices. *Psychoanalytic study of the child, 47*, 371-389.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE